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18 OCT 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Meeting on Current Chilean Situation at  
Department of State, 1630-1830, 17 October 1972

ATTENDEES: Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-  
American Affairs Charles A. Meyer  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-  
American Affairs John H. Grimmins  
Mr. William J. Jorden, Senior Staff Member  
of the National Security Council  
Mr. John W. Fisher, Director of Bolivian/  
Chilean Affairs, Department of State  
Mr. James R. Gardner, Chief, Operations  
Policy Staff, Department of State  
[REDACTED] Chief, WH Division

1. Mr. Meyer's purpose in calling the meeting was to consider as a contingency, what the U.S. Government's response should be if the opposition to Allende were to approach the Embassy [REDACTED] Santiago with a request for (a) support in toppling the Allende Government, or (b) an assurance of post-coup support as a prior condition for undertaking a coup, or, (c) U.S. Government commitment to post-coup support for a coup already arranged and decided upon. Since time would probably be a factor in responding to any such request, the Department of State felt it was necessary to have at least some preliminary discussion of the problems and options involved in this type of contingency.

2. [REDACTED] noted that, earlier in the day, appropriate CIA elements had brainstormed the current Chilean situation from every conceivable angle. This had resulted in the conclusion that the most likely outcome in the current crisis was that a coup would

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[REDACTED]

not develop within the next few days. This conclusion was based on the estimate that the country would have to suffer a little more under Allende before the kind of consensus which would provoke the military into deciding on a coup would be reached among the main elements of the opposition -- that is, the military, the political parties, and the private sector. It was stressed that up to 17 October, there had been absolutely no indication that General Carlos Prats, the Chilean Army Commander-in-Chief, was ready to do anything except maintain law and order and, in the process, support the constitutional Allende government. The point was also made that it was fairly obvious that the opposition political parties were reluctantly caught up in this wave of strikes and other actions against the government; essentially they started out supporting the strikes in order to preserve their credentials in the opposition. The private sector, in instigating the strikes which led to the current situation, had, and have, no clear goals but felt this was the only way to create a situation in which the military and the political sectors would be forced to consider a coup against the Allende regime. [REDACTED] concluded his assessment by stating that it is, of course, always possible that some action which could not be reasonably anticipated might take place and act as a catalyst for moving the military into a coup effort. As an example of this type of unforeseen occurrence he mentioned a clash between the security forces and students in which a number of students were killed. Short of that, however, the coup probabilities seemed quite low at this juncture. [REDACTED] noted that in the course of the CIA brainstorming session, various courses of action had been examined to see if it were in the net interests of the United States to accelerate current Chilean events leading toward a coup. The conclusion was that no course of action which could be taken would help in a decisive manner to achieve the objective of removing Allende from power.

3. It was conceded by all that, in the final analysis, the Chilean military were the key to any coup that might develop now or in the future. [REDACTED]

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6. The group finally did agree on the following:

a. If and when the Chilean military decided to undertake a coup, they would not need U.S. Government assistance or support to do so successfully nor are they likely to seek such support. Further, given the Chilean military capabilities for an unaided coup, any U.S. intervention or assistance in the coup per se should be avoided.

b.



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